



Secretary, Chairperson and Treasurer

In the SACP Constitution, the duties of the General Secretary, National Chairperson and National Treasurer are spelled out in detail (see the extract reproduced below). But for Provincial, District and Branch Office Bearers in the SACP, although the three positions are all mentioned, the detail is not given.

For a general discussion of what these elected officers are supposed to do, in the SACP, one must draw from the national level and treat it as the model for the lower levels of structure.

Party members are also involved in the ANC, the trade unions, other mass organisations and many other structures. There is some variation, but in general the functions of the three principal officers are similar in all organisations.

The linked document is adapted from a page on the Internet,

chosen from among many similar ones on the topic. It can serve to represent the standard thinking on the roles of the three main officer positions, even in quite different types of organisation, and in different countries.

President is another name for Chairperson. Secretary-General and General Secretary are both in fact Secretaries. Treasurer-General means Treasurer. In this item we are not discussing nomenclature, but only function.

Leading Role of the Secretary

In the SACP, as in most Communist Parties, the Secretary is the leading office bearer, and therefore is the political leader at any level. The Secretary is continuously involved with nearly everything that happens, both at meetings, and in between meetings.

Chairperson

The previous item has dealt with the Chairperson's function in detail. Here, we can note that in the ANC, the Chairperson is always the senior office-bearer, and so in the ANC the Chairperson has more scope to impose upon the meeting.

In COSATU Unions and in COSATU itself, the President is in theory the senior position, and the President (Chairperson) is a "worker leader" who is not employed by the union, and who does not draw a salary from the union. Mostly these workers retain their former jobs.

But in the COSATU form of organisation, the Secretary (General Secretary) is the head of the full-time employed establishment of the organisation, and is therefore the employer (hiring and firing) of the staff and the person to whom the staff report.

The COSATU form of organisation has proved to be vulnerable to conflict between President and General Secretary.

In general, the duties of the Chairperson are lighter than those of the Secretary or Treasurer, being in the essential task confined to presiding at meetings. It is also easier for somebody to deputise for the Chairperson than for the other tasks. But it is a very important function, nevertheless.

Treasurer

The treasurer should make sure that the assets of the structure are kept securely. These include not only cash but also non-cash assets such as a banner, for a typical branch-level example. The treasurer must be able to produce an account of the assets, usually in the form of a Receipts and Payments account for the year and Balance Sheet as at the year's end, at least.

The treasurer need not personally be the book-keeper and should never be the fund-raiser. Fund-raising is a task that falls upon the organisation as a whole.

Convenors, Co-ordinators, and Organisers

These titles can be useful where there is a clear sub-division of responsibility within a structure, but they can also be a sign of

weak organisation. This is particularly the case when they are used as substitutes for Chairperson or Secretary. There can really be no substitute for those offices.

Convenor is a useful designation for the leader of a small task team. Organiser is a good term for someone whose responsibility is to recruit and expand the organisation.

“Co-ordinator” is not a word that fits well in any structure. It is best not used, ever. The problem with such words is that they do not assist to define the organic and necessary functions, but on the contrary, are intended to blur the distinction between functions. As such they are anti-organisation and for that reason should be avoided.

From the SACP Constitution:

11. Duties of the General Secretary

The General Secretary shall be the leading National Office Bearer of the SACP according to conditions determined by the CC. The General Secretary shall be an ex officio member of all party structures and shall:

- 11.1 Keep (or cause to be kept) the minutes of all CC and PB meetings and such other books, records and archives as may be required.
- 11.2 Attend to the correspondence of the CC and PB.
- 11.3 Maintain regular personal and written contact with all the provinces and keep the membership informed of the work of the CC and PB.
- 11.4 Ensure that members of the CC are kept informed of

- the work of the PB in between meetings of the CC.
- 11.5 Draw up (or cause to be drawn up) all reports and documents as may be decided upon by the CC or PB.
- 11.6 The Deputy General Secretaries shall, as directed by the CC, taking into account their respective portfolios, deputise for the General Secretary in respect of all the functions set out above.

12. Duties of the National Chairperson

The National Chairperson shall rank after the General Secretary as a national office bearer of the SACP and shall be an ex officio member of all party structures. The National Chairperson shall:

- 12.1 Preside at all meetings of the CC and PB in conformity with the constitution and other rules and procedures adopted by these bodies.
- 12.2 Have a deliberative vote only.
- 12.3 The Deputy National Chairperson shall, as directed by the CC, deputise for the National Chairperson in respect of all the functions set out above.

13. Duties of the National Treasurer

The National Treasurer shall:

- 13.1 Under the direction of the CC and PB take all necessary measures to ensure that the SACP is provided with sufficient means to carry out its political and organisational tasks.
- 13.2 Dispose of such funds as the CC authorised by general or specific mandate.
- 13.3 Be responsible for the safe-keeping and administration of all property and monies of the SACP.

- 13.4 Keep such books and accounts as will clearly record and reflect the financial position of the SACP and submit statements of income and expenditure to the CC and PB at intervals to be determined by the CC and PB.
- 13.5 Under the direction of the CC present audited financial statements and written financial reports to the Congress.
- 13.6 Be the convenor of a Finance Committee appointed by the CC.
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- The above is to introduce an original reading-text: [Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, SCVO, 2010](#).
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